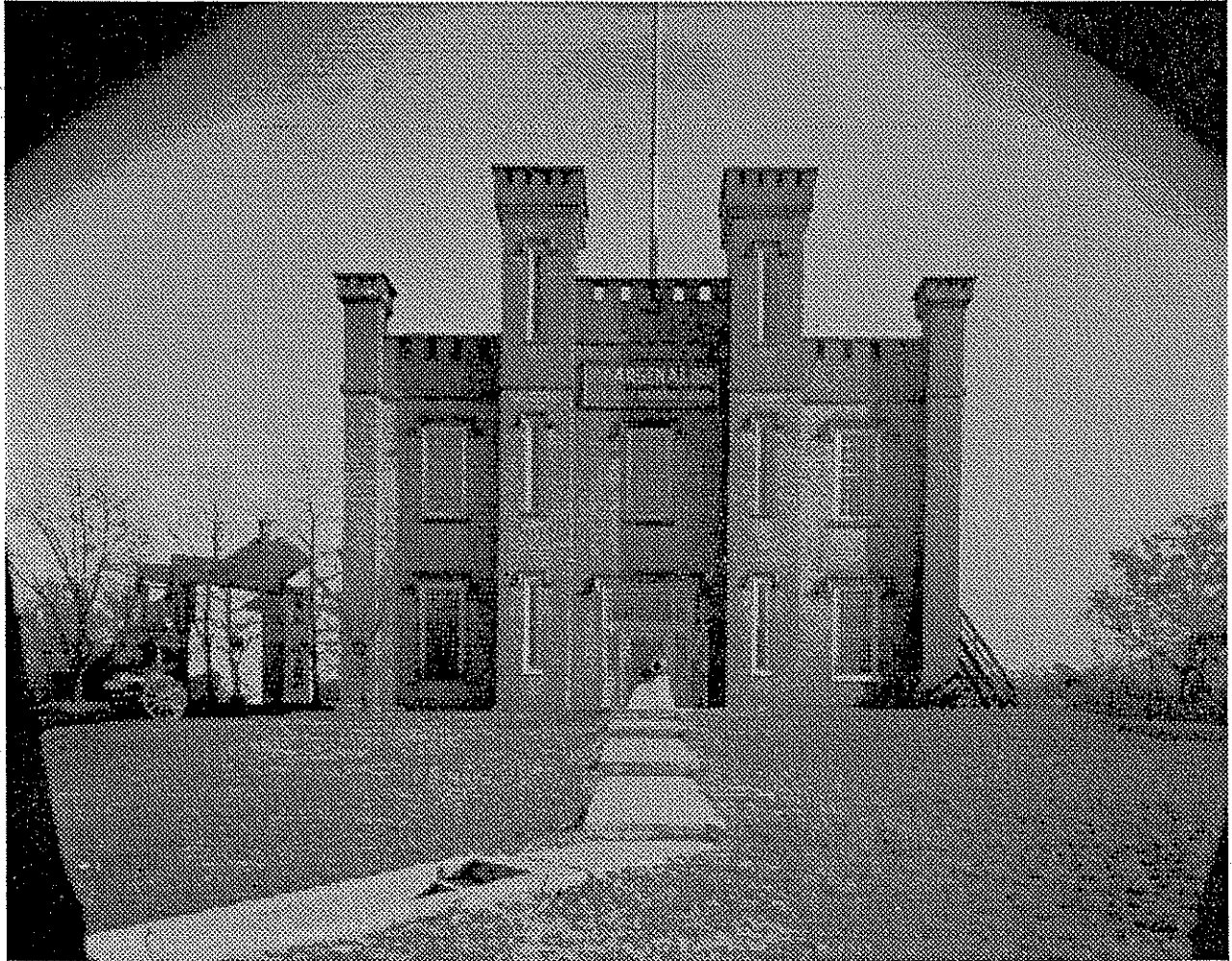


The State Arsenal

In Service Since 1850



The Kentucky legislature ordered construction of the State Arsenal in 1850 and appropriated \$8,000 to pay for its construction. The initial appropriation bill required that the State Arsenal be at least one-half mile away from the capitol. This distance would protect the capitol from damage like that suffered in 1836 when an earlier arsenal on the capitol grounds exploded and burned.



Frankfort resident Nathaniel C. Cook was the architect who designed the State Arsenal in 1850. He also designed several other public buildings in Kentucky, including court houses and churches. Cook served as a private in the First Kentucky Regiment of Mounted Volunteers in the Mexican War and in the Civil War was a member of the 36th Regiment of Enrolled Militia called out by the governor to defend Frankfort against Confederate raiders in June 1864. The success of this defense probably saved the Arsenal from destruction at the hands of the Confederates.

marked, Scott Brown of Genl
 1st & 2nd Charges for 5.52 - 1st & 2nd 1862

1860
 Dec 26 I have issued out of the State Arsenal by order
 5 Colls Pistols to Ky Penitentiary for guarding State
 Prison, also 2 muskets
 I have also issued to Genl L.B. Buckner 2 Colls Pistols
 for the purpose of forming a manual for the Army.
 These pistols are to be returned when called for.
 I also have issued upon receipt to Doct H. Rodman
 1 Colls Pistol - (Returned by Dr. Rodman Jan 24 1862)
 Also to Capt. John A. Holton 1 Colls Pistol Returned Feb 5 1862.
 " " L. J. Cox 1 Colls Pistol Returned Feb 5 1862
 all to be returned when called for.
 I have also given to Raymond I. Wise upon requisition
 1 lighted State Musket.
 I have loaned Jack Moore to shoot Pigeons 1 Musket.
 I have loaned Frank Chin Eng. 1 musket to shoot Crows
 " " to Lewis Bristol 1 Old Musket
 " " to Dr. W. C. Snead 1 Flint Lock Musket
 to guard his life and property.
 I have loaned Capt. M. G. Wilkes of Frankfort 1 pr Horse Pistols
 & a percussion lock to fight a duel with.
 I have let J. Martin of Midway Ky have three Flint lock
 " " Pistols, a specimen putting on percussion locks.
 all the above arms are to be returned when called for
 M. D. West
 2d Master General.

Reproduced here is a page from the 1860 record book of weapons coming into and being issued from the State Arsenal. It includes entries recording loans of weapons for shooting pigeons and fighting duels. At this time the Arsenal housed over 12,000 weapons including nearly 8,000 muskets, over 800 rifles, 1,500 pistols, and 1,200 swords.

Office of the Quartermaster General,
FOR THE STATE OF KENTUCKY

Frankfort, Ky., 186

Frankfort, Ky., 186.....
Property Captured from Arsenal.

4 bbls 6 pdr. Shot
12 Quarter Kegs powder $1\frac{1}{4}$ lbs each
30 boxes fixed Ammunition
60 altered muskets
109 Horse pistols
100 do altered from flint lock
9 bbls Lead (8400 lbs)
2 Brass 6 pdr. Cannon, not mounted
3 Iron " " " " " & rifled
1 old mortar (since recovered)
1 Union Repeater, or Coffee Mill gun
Small lot of bullets

This list records the weapons and equipment removed from the State Arsenal by the Confederates during their occupation of Frankfort in late 1862. In 1864, the State Arsenal was under hostile gunfire for the only time in its history. In June of that year the Confederates attempted to take Frankfort again. Gunners on the Arsenal lawn exchanged shots with Confederate cavalrymen on the opposite bank of the Kentucky river.

Invoice State Arsenal

1 Bale Overcoats	new	25	✓
" " "	"	88	✓
Trousers	not made up	181 Pairs	✓
Old stile	made up	51	✓
Tremier	for Trousers	177	✓
Blouses	new	402	✓
"	Bad Order	76	✓
Old Clothing		21 Boxes	✓
Cups	new	402	✓
"	Old	73	✓
Drums	new	8	✓
"	Old	1	✓
"	Sticks	3 Pairs	✓
Blanket Bag		32	✓
" " "	straps	259	✓
Brass Hooks		230	✓
Haversacks		145	✓
" " "	Straps	706	✓
Cartridges	Boxes	200	✓
Waist Belts & Plates		250	✓
Bayonet	new	270	✓
"	Old	150	✓
Bayonets	Scabards	200	✓
Canteens		285	✓
"	d. traps	635	✓
Rubber Ponchoes		120	✓
Drum Heads		30	✓
Fifes		5	✓

This portion of an inventory of the State Arsenal from the last quarter of the nineteenth century demonstrates the great variety and enormous volume of military material that passed through the building. Everything from overcoats to tin cups came here for storage and eventual issue to Kentucky State Guard troops.

WILL H. LYONS,
ATTORNEY AT LAW,
NOTARY PUBLIC.

Nov 14th 1895

Governor W O Bradley,

Dear Sir,

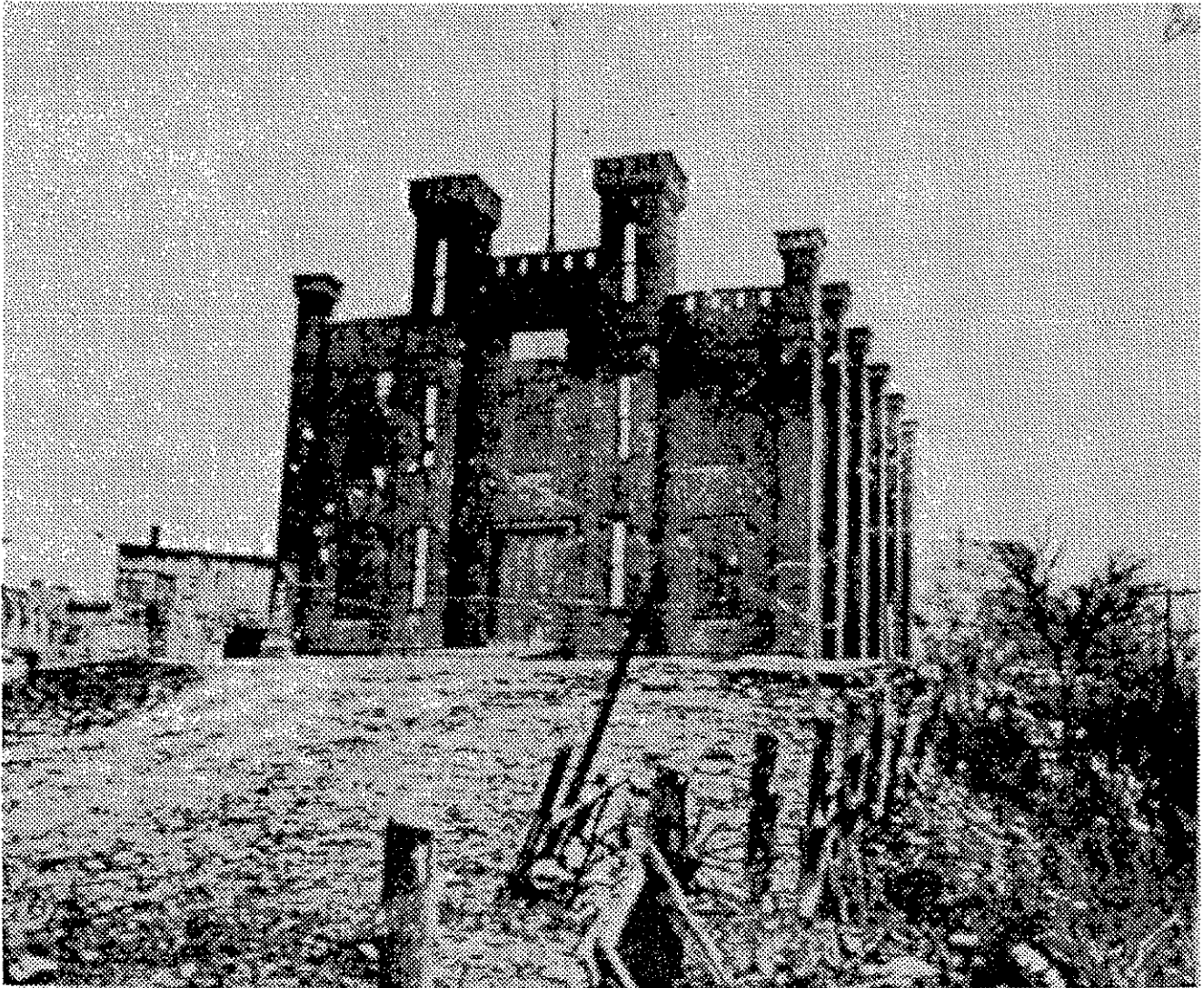
I know the annoyances that you are subject to, from applicants for office and their friends and I assure you that I shall make very few recommendations, and those only of the best class,

I wish to recommend in the strongest manner possible Capt Robert Townsend, an old soldier, of the 23rd Ky, A warm friend and advocate of yours and the President of the Bradley Club of Newport, for the position of Keeper of the Arsenal at Frankfort. He has been wounded, has a fine military record, Has always been a staunch Republican, is now getting old, and has nothing saved, Is a man of fine personal character, and far away above the average in business ability and education, In giving this position to him you will be rewarding a faithful friend of your own, recognizing an old soldier and securing the State a first class servant, Mr Ahlering informed me today that he would recommend him to you, and I know that your old friend L R Hawthorne will do the same, Campbell County gives you 1387 majority, and Capt Townsends appointment will be a recognition of her good work that will be appreciated and remembered,

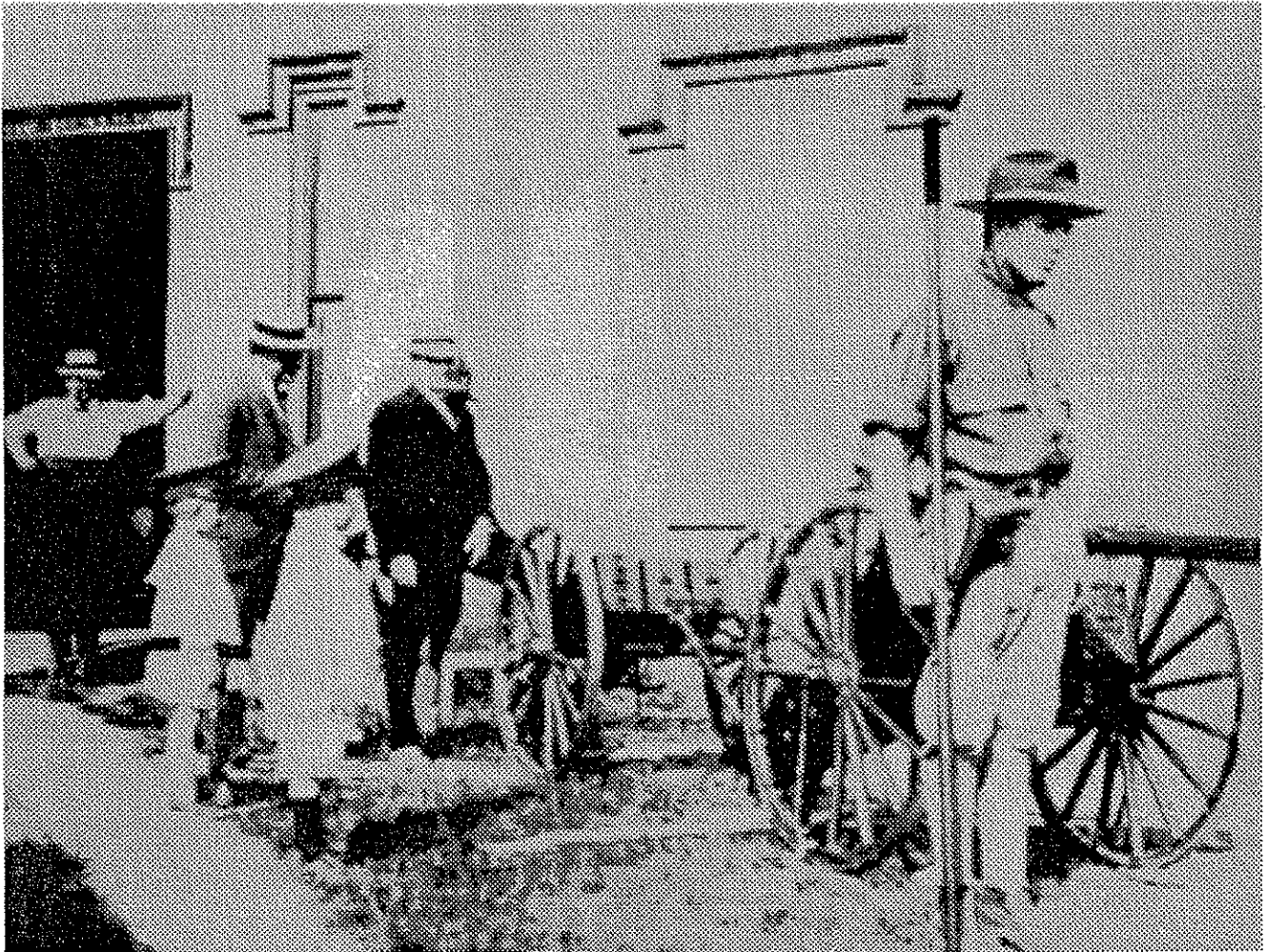
Very Respy

W H Lyons

Records of the history of the State Arsenal contain many letters like this one recommending a candidate for the office of Keeper of the State Arsenal. Like most state positions in the late nineteenth century, this job was awarded as a political favor to friends of the governors. Political loyalty and service on the appropriate side during the Civil War were deemed essential qualifications for the job.



This photograph shows a rather unkempt State Arsenal in 1900. During the Goebel assassination crisis the Arsenal was kept under close guard for fear that one of the warring political factions would make an attempt to seize the many arms stored there. Cooler heads prevailed, and no such attempt was made.



A one-pounder Hotchkiss Gun fires a ceremonial salute from the lawn of the State Arsenal. For decades this building was the site of such salutes on special occasions, and remains so today. The legislature required some of these by law. Such events as deaths of state and national leaders, anniversaries of the Battle of New Orleans and other national triumphs, as well as Independence Day, saw gunners banging away with national salutes in front of the State Arsenal. Most recently, Governor Jones' inaugural parade was started following the firing of cannon from the lawn of the Arsenal and cannon again roared from the lawn to commemorate Kentucky's bicentennial.



The State Arsenal has been extensively renovated several times. This photograph probably shows the building following the 1915 work. By then it bore a coat of gray paint. In the early 1960s this was replaced by green. In 1973 the green paint was removed to return the building to its natural brick appearance.



In 1934 a fire of indeterminate origin gutted the interior of the State Arsenal. Thousands of dollars worth of government property was destroyed but the outer walls of the building remained solid and a new interior was soon installed. It remains in place today.

Renovation Under Way

Arsenal To Be Museum

Development is under way of a military history museum in the heart of the state's capital.

About a dozen members of the 201st Engineer Battalion are spending their two-week annual training period renovating the inside of the old Kentucky Arsenal building which overlooks the Kentucky River.

Battalion Commander Lt. Col. Robert L. Dezarn called the project one of the most important jobs the engineers will take on this year.

The Kentucky Department of Military Affairs is providing the building and the renovation manpower for the museum project. The Kentucky Historical

Society will provide the exhibits and set them up, as its contribution to the joint effort. The Kentucky Military History Commission will govern the project.

Frankfort's newest tourist attraction will open in two stages. Commission Chairman Gen. William R. Buster says every effort will be made to open the first floor of the new Arsenal Museum this fall. The first floor will house a presentation of Kentucky's participation in the nation's war efforts, from pioneer days through the Vietnam conflict.

No projected opening date has yet been set for the second floor

of the new museum. That section will house an extensive weapons display, naval and air force exhibits, and a presentation of the history of Kentucky National Guard units dating back to the days of Daniel Boone.

Among the most interesting exhibits will be the story of the Arsenal building itself. Constructed in the 1850's the Arsenal was captured by the Confederate Army during the Civil War, retaken by Union forces, and attacked again by the Rebels. It was used by the Kentucky National Guard for storage of arms and equipment until the World War II era.



Arsenal Will House Military History Museum

By the early 1970s the Department of Military Affairs had built a new complex called the Boone Center on the outskirts of Frankfort and the State Arsenal was no longer needed. Meanwhile, the Kentucky Historical Society's restoration of the Old Capitol had displaced the extensive collection of weapons and other military relics once housed there. In 1973 officials of both agencies decided to place the Historical Society collection in the National Guard building and create the Kentucky Military History Museum.

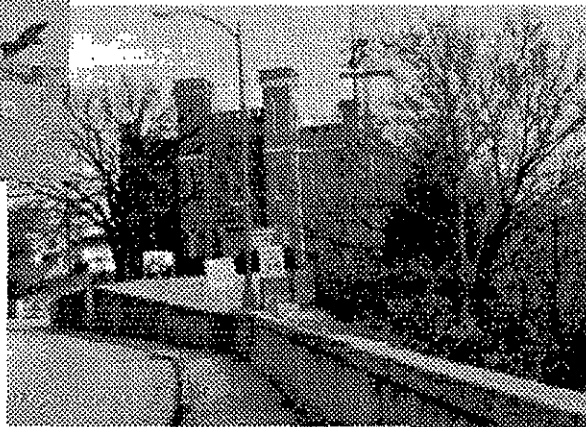


On February 18, 1974, the Kentucky Military History Museum opened to the public. Governor, now U.S. Senator, Wendell Ford spoke at the opening ceremonies and formally opened the museum. The Old State Arsenal continues to house "the military relics, weapons, and banners" of the Commonwealth of Kentucky. The Old State Arsenal has remained in service for its original purpose far longer than any other building erected by Kentucky state government.



Placing 90mm cannon during construction of parking lot, July, 1991.

During the winter of 1990, the Kentucky National Guard appropriated \$120,000 to construct a desperately needed parking lot. This new area greatly increased public accessibility to the Old State Arsenal and its museum. Today, because of this addition, groups of school children taking part in the museum's educational programs can safely exit and enter their buses without being subjected to the dangers of Main Street traffic.



Now, during the twentieth anniversary of the Arsenal's use as the Kentucky Military History Museum, it is imperative that efforts be made to retard deterioration caused by the continual use of this treasured landmark by thousands of the state's citizens and visitors from around the world.

The Arsenal itself is a treasured artifact and the time has come to begin to treat it with the respect it so rightfully deserves.

Executive Committee

Kentucky Military History Museum

1991 - 1995

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